

## Library User Education Programme 1993/94

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**Abstrak:** Sempena Minggu Haluansiswa yang diadakan oleh Bahagian Hal Ehwal Pelajar, Universiti Malaya untuk pelajar-pelajar baru, Perpustakaan telah mengadakan Program Pendidikan Pengguna khusus untuk membolehkan pelajar-pelajar baru memperolehi kemahiran-kemahiran asas dalam penggunaan perpustakaan. Kemahiran-kemahiran asas dalam pencarian dan penggunaan maklumat amatlah penting untuk mengajar dan melatih pelajar-pelajar baru mengguna perpustakaan secara berdikari. Dalam usaha ini, Perpustakaan telah menyediakan program di mana para pelajar telah diperkenalkan kepada struktur dan organisasi perpustakaan, jenis dan skop koleksi, perkhidmatan-perkhidmatan yang diberi serta teknik-teknik pencarian maklumat yang canggih dan terkini. Pendek kata, tujuan utama Program ini ialah untuk mendedahkan pelajar-pelajar baru kepada apa yang relevan di perpustakaan untuk pembelajaran mereka dan bagaimana mereka dapat memperolehi sumber-sumber maklumat atau maklumat yang tertentu yang dikehendaki melalui perkhidmatan dan sistem yang disediakan. Program ini merangkumi sesi-sesi orientasi di mana para pelajar didedahkan kepada susunatur, koleksi dan perkhidmatan perpustakaan, tunjukajar penggunaan OPAC dan penyediaan perkhidmatan pertanyaan selama sebulan.

**Abstract:** In conjunction with the Orientation Week organised by the Student Affairs Division of the University of Malaya, the Library undertook a Library User Education Programme for new students of the 1993/94 academic session. With the objective of inculcating lifelong skills and encouragement of independent learning the user education programme that lasted for a month was drawn up incorporating library orientation and the more indepth library instruction. During the library tour students were introduced to the library, its collection and services. OPAC sessions were conducted to instruct students on information retrieval to meet their needs. Follow-up sessions for more indepth searching was facilitated and a reference enquiry desk service was set up. In future the Library will play a more determining role in the University's orientation programme to further improve the effectiveness of user education.

### Introduction

In planning library user education the goals and objectives of the programme must be in agreement with the general aims of the university library, that in turn must relate to the goals and aims of higher education. The University of Malaya Library is an integral part of the university. Its role is to provide services which facilitate the teaching, learning and research functions of the university. In respect of its role to facilitate the teaching-learning process it is the responsibility of the library not only to support the teaching function of the university but also to actively participate in that function. The

library's basic responsibility in user education is to instruct users in the effective identification and use of information sources relevant to their needs and interests. It aims to equip students with life-long skills in relation to the retrieval of information and to teach them to make intelligent, independent decisions about library use. In this way library user education plays its role of supporting the university's objective of encouraging independent learning among students. This in turn supports the objective of higher education to educate individuals and prepare them with the life-long ability for critical thinking, decision-making and problem solving.

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To meet the objectives of library user education the programme should be structured in such a way that it will enable the student to recognise the library as a vital primary source of information and to familiarise himself with the resources available to him. It should equip him with fundamental retrieval skills to enable effective use of the library resources such as catalogues, reference sources and computer terminals to retrieve information on even the most specialised of topics. The programme ought to convey the fact that libraries use classification systems to organise materials so that the student will recognise that classification numbers and subject headings are meaningful in obtaining relevant information on his topic. It will enable him to interpret records and information on holdings and make effective use of the more complex library resources ranging from periodical indexes and abstracts to governmental publications. It must develop in the student an appreciation of scholarly communication in his field, an understanding of the scientific publications cycle and trust in approaching information personnel for assistance. The acquisition of such skills and understanding of concepts will have life-long benefits for the user.

User education must integrate in its programme not only skills and concepts but also new technology. With advances in technology dramatic changes have occurred in terms of storage of information in computerised form. Library card catalogues have been abandoned in favour of online computerised catalogues and information sources stored in digital form in compact discs called CD-ROM are rapidly replacing printed versions. Incorporated in the library user education programme in the University of Malaya Library is instruction on new technological developments and teaching of specialised retrieval skills related to the use of online and CD-ROM databases.

With these educational objectives and framework of user education in mind, the Library User Education Programme for the 1993/94 academic session embarked a new approach of combining library orientation with library instruction. In the literature of user education a distinction is often made between library orientation and library instruction. Whilst library orientation is concerned with enabling students to become aware of the existence of the univer-

sity library and the services available to them, library instruction is concerned with problems of information retrieval and enables students to obtain information required for specific purposes. The programme thus comprised a personalised library tour, Online Public Access Catalogue (OPAC) instruction and an enquiry desk service. The programme stretched over a period of seven weeks, beginning with the official university orientation week, from 5 July 1993 to 14 August 1993.

The Library User Education Programme from now will be formally developed to "build bridges" with the teaching faculties and will incorporate user education instruction sessions on particular subjects. Attempts will be made to incorporate new instructional strategies in user education and new approaches such as reflective and critical thinking will be explored. This article describes in detail the Library User Education Programme for undergraduates of the 1993/94 academic session scheduled for a period of seven weeks.

### Orientation Sessions

This was to introduce the new students to the library and to inform them briefly and efficiently the library services and collections. This was performed in a personalised manner with professional staff taking the students on a tour of the library and pointing out the collections and services.

Orientation is the first step in any library instruction programme and new users, like travellers in a foreign country, need to find their bearings with basic information about the library. Students must know how the library is arranged physically before they are able to use the services and collections. A library tour by groups of students guided by professional staff provided the students with a first-hand knowledge of the library.

With the introduction of advanced technology in the form of computers and in particular with the availability of an online catalogue, OPAC, there is a need to familiarise students with the search procedures and protocols required in using OPAC. This includes teaching effective and efficient use of the library's collection by way of OPAC. The time-consuming



but personalised library tour was therefore combined with elements of bibliographic instruction to impart basic retrieval skills. The latter was strategically provided in the second and third weeks of the programme.

### **Team Effort**

With a total of 2,355 new students (excluding the Medical, Dental, Biomedical, Nursing and Law students who are serviced by branch libraries) and seven time slots in the week allocated by the Student Affairs Division of the University, the Library Orientation necessitated a team effort on the part of the professional staff.

The planning, coordination and management of the programme was the responsibility of the Reader Services Division. It was apparent that the library tour, if it was to be successful and personalised, required the participation of other divisions in the library. There were nine volunteers doing an average of six library tours each. Another five professionals were coopted during an unexpected turn out in the number of students at a particular time slot. A total number of 1,600 students benefitted from the library tours. In all, 56 tours were conducted with an average of 22 students per tour.

### **Materials, handouts and trial run**

Confirmation of the tour dates was made at a meeting with the Student Affairs Division of the University. Official announcement was made by way of letters to every faculty, department, unit, centre and residential college of the University. Posters for display at the respective premises were appended. Venue and time of tours were also indicated.

For up-to-date and comprehensive information on the library, its layout, collections and services, a booklet was produced and distributed to the students. A set of handouts announced rules and regulations of the library. Also dispensed was a handout announcing loan procedures of the basic recommended reading materials in the Red Spot Collection.

A quick basic guide to the use of OPAC was produced and distributed to participants at the OPAC instruction sessions. This was supple-

mented with a single sheet handout explaining elements of a bibliographic record that appear on the screen when searching OPAC.

At a strategic location in the library foyer, a Library User Education Display Board was mounted. Posters of the floor plans, bookstack levels, opening hours, collections, services and notices relating to the Library User Education Programme were displayed. A schedule of the OPAC instruction sessions was drawn up for students to select, register and attend them. These sessions were held in the Reading Hall in the lower level of the first floor of the Library.

To ensure consistency and comprehensiveness in presentation and coverage of the tour by the professional staff, a tour route was drawn up for them. Discussions were held to iron out irregularities and a trial run of the tour was made prior to the orientation week.

### **The Tour**

The programme commenced with a briefing by one of the reference librarians in the Reference Hall where the students assembled. With the aid of a one-minute electronic slide show using the microcomputer, information on collections, services, branch libraries and general library etiquette to be observed in the library was presented. The briefing provided an opportunity to announce the OPAC instruction sessions and to stress the importance of attending them. Library registration procedures were also explained.

The one-hour tour of the library commenced after students were split into manageable groups of 20-25 each. Each group was led on the personalised tour by a librarian. This method permitted first-hand knowledge of collections and services to the students. They were led from one service point to another. At the Circulation Service Counter the online computerised loan, return and reservation transactions were demonstrated. The aim was to familiarise students with the online system. With this, students will be able to tell if a book is on loan, when it is due and how reservations may be made. Students were again reminded to register for the OPAC instruction sessions. All tours were conducted in the first week of the programme, from 29 June 1993 till 3 July 1993.



## OPAC Instruction Sessions

Team effort was also required for this part of the programme. Held from 5 July 1993 to 17 July 1993 on an hourly basis, the sessions were conducted by nine professional librarians. In all, 54 sessions were held with about 1,080 students attending.

With the aid of an overhead projector and a computer panel to project the OPAC screen, students were taught how to trace library materials by author, title, subject and call number. A significant advantage in using computer technology is the ability to provide 'keyword' access in searching. By combining keywords or significant words that define a topic, students were taught to trace relevant materials on their areas of interest.

As a reinforcement, students were provided a further opportunity to pursue more indepth searching via OPAC sessions offered by the professional staff on night duty. These follow-up sessions were conducted on a one-to-one basis in the evenings from 5 to 6 for four weeks, that is after the OPAC instruction sessions period, from 19 July 1993 to 14 August 1993.

## Enquiry Desk

An enquiry desk was stationed in the foyer of the library for answering quick reference queries. Both directional, quick reference and catalogue enquiries were received. The desk also served as an access point for students to place requests for additional copies of essential reading materials recommended by lecturers. Special request forms were devised for this purpose. The titles requested were ordered immediately by the library.

## Conclusion

In reviewing the Library User Education Programme it was evident that the role of the library *vis-a-vis* the Orientation programme of the university needed to be re-examined. In future the library plans to play an instrumental role in the planning and organisational stage of the university's orientation programme that pertains to the use of the library. Traditionally the Student Affairs Division of the University has been responsible for drawing up the time schedules for the library visits for new students. Students had been scheduled for library visits according to their colleges of residence. They were grouped randomly irrespective of courses pursued. The time slots allotted were too few.

Subject-based and faculty-based groups would be a better rationale for grouping than college-based groups. With such a breadth and depth of collection and wealth of information in the library, user education will be more effective if it includes highlighting of and concentration on collections and services relevant to the student.

To enable students to make meaningful use of classification numbers and subject headings, to retrieve information for their topics and to understand the complexities of publications in subject fields, faculty-based group visits and instruction will be attempted.

To meet the objectives of user education and to have a more effective programme the library will involve itself directly with the Student Affairs Division in order to determine that the library schedules are based on the needs of particular groups.